Students' Perceptions of Teacher Interaction in the English Classroom: A Gender-Based Study

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Abstract

This paper has explored how secondary school students perceive teacher interaction in the English classroom, gender variation being the case of interest. A quantitative, descriptive-comparative research design was adopted, which included 1,350 students 675 male and 675 female students in Grades 8, 9, and 10 in government secondary schools of District Gujranwala in Pakistan. The standardized Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI-U) was used to collect the data and is a questionnaire that assesses teacher behaviors in eight subscales. These results showed that the students tended to see their teachers as supportive, understanding, helpful, and leadership-oriented, and admonishing, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction were rarely noticed. There was a gender analysis of male and female students where their perceptions were close with a slight difference where female students had a better perception of leadership. In general, the research paper reveals the significance of good and fair teacher relations in building appropriate, encouraging, and socially positive learning experiences. The results give an informational source to the educators and the policymakers to ultimately improve the interactions of the teachers and the students as well as to foster the development of the students as a whole being.

Keywords: Teacher Interaction, English Classroom, Students' Perceptions, Gender Differences, Secondary Education, Positive Classroom Environment

Introduction

Interaction between teachers and students has been widely recognized as a key element in the process of teaching and learning especially in language classrooms where communication is not only the mode but also the end of teaching and learning. Meaningful interaction in English classes promotes language learning, improves student participation and the acquisition of communicative competence. It has been demonstrated in numerous previous studies that positive interaction between teachers and their students, including positive feedback, participation encouragement, and responsiveness, leads to better academic results and motivation among learners in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners (Derakhshan et al., 2020). Perceptions of teacher interaction are of particular significance in students as it determines how students perceive classroom experiences and react to classroom instruction. The perceived teacher support, fairness, and approachability are linked to an increased classroom participation, confidence, and willingness to communicate in English. In case the students feel that teachers are ready to be helpful and respectful, they are more inclined to be actively involved in the learning activity and to risk using the target language (Hu and Wang, 2023). Engagement is the central

feature of the classroom practice as the English language teaching is a communicative one. In contrast to content-based objects, the new approach to teaching English depends on dialogue, questioning, feedback, and group work. This interaction facilitates the process of negotiating meaning, which is an effective way in which students practise language skills as well as fluency. The research in EFL classrooms on the secondary school level shows that interaction intensive classroom settings notably promote language proficiency and engagement among students in comparison to teacher-centered classroom settings where students have minimal interaction (Ardasheva et al., 2017; Sato, 2024). Another significant aspect which can potentially affect the patterns of teacher-student interaction and the perception of this process by the students is gender. Research on classroom indicates that there is a possibility that teachers unconsciously respond differently to male and female students in the classroom with regards to questioning, feedback, encouragement and disciplinary actions. These variations may influence the attitudes of students towards equity and classroom assistance, consequently influencing their motivation and interest in learning English (Aronson and Laughter, 2020). It has been found that male and female students usually have a different perception of teacher interaction. The female students are more likely to be responsive to emotional support, encouragement and collaborative interaction, whereas the male students are likely to be responsive to task-oriented or directive interaction. Such different perceptions may also affect the patterns of participation in the classroom and the confidence of the students to use English, especially in classes mixes with gender (Alrabai, 2021).

The difference of teacher-student interaction on gender basis might also be a reflection of the broader sociocultural norms and expectations, particularly in traditional or examination system of education. In certain cases, the male students are given more attention and a chance to contribute, whereas the female students might lack that motivation to talk and dominate the classroom. These differences may have a harmful impact on the development of language and classroom activities of female students unless they are overcome by means of inclusive teaching (Amini and Weisi, 2023). Although the topic of teacher-student interaction and gender differences has become the subject of increased international literature, there has been little research on the perceptions of students regarding teacher interaction within the English classrooms at the secondary level, especially in the developing countries. The available research focuses much on the views of teachers or the overall classroom behavior, but little is known about how students perceive it based on gender perceptions. The identified gap demonstrates the necessity of empirical research that can investigate the perceptions of male and female students toward teacher interaction in the English classrooms (Al-Hoorie and Hiver, 2020). Gender-based notions of teacher interaction have to be understood to facilitate fair and effective English language teaching. The findings of these studies can be used to guide teacher education, classroom management techniques, and teaching methods to provide equal and facilitating interaction to all students. This research will aim to make a contribution to the literature concerning classroom interaction as it will explore the perspectives of students through the lens of gender to foster the creation of an inclusive learning environment teaching English (Derakhshan and Zhang, 2024).

Rationale of the Study
Student interaction with a teacher plays a very important role in determining the learning experience of the students particularly in an English classroom where language development is contributed by communication, feedback, and engagement between the student and the teacher. The perceptions of the students towards the behavior of the teachers also affect their motivation,

confidence, participation and general involvement and it is therefore necessary to know what the students think about the teachers behavior to enhance teaching process and classroom support. Gender differences can also influence the pattern of meeting with the teacher by the students, conditioned by the manner of instruction, classroom discipline, and the sociocultural values. Unanalyzed differences may cause a lack of engagement, decrease or limited learning. Although such dynamics are important, limited research has been conducted on the gender-based perception of teacher interaction by the students who attend secondary schools regarding English classes especially in developing settings. The majority of the studies consider teacher behavior or overall classroom interaction without considering the perspective of students. This research thus explores the perception that students have towards teacher interaction using the gender perspective in order to inform the teachers, administrators, and policymakers on the possible disparity as well as encouraging inclusive, equitable, and engaging English language classes.

Statement of the Problem

An effective teacher student interaction is a major factor that determines the engagement, motivation and academic achievement of students in English classes. Nevertheless, these interactions can be understood differently by students depending on gender and affect the students participation, confidence and overall learning experience. Nevertheless, although it is important, not much empirical research has been conducted to investigate the way male and female secondary school learners perceive teacher interaction in English classes, particularly in the context of developing countries. This is because without this evidence, it becomes hard to instruct and formulate inclusive teaching actions that would make the classroom environment conducive and supportive to all the students in a way that will bring equity in the classroom. Thus, the aim of the given study is to explore the perceptions of students concerning the teacher interaction in English classrooms through the prism of gender-based diversity with the purpose to inform the betterment of the instructional practices as well as an interesting and equal learning process.

Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the perception of students towards teacher interaction in English classroom.
2. To compare the perception of the students regarding teacher interaction in English classroom according to gender.

Research Questions

1. How do students view teacher interaction in English classroom?
2. Do female and male students differ considerably in their perceptions of teacher interaction in English classroom?

Review of Literature

The teacher-student interaction is another important aspect of effective teaching English language, in which both the medium and the end of learning is through communication. Interaction involves teacher questioning, feedbacks and classroom discussions that increase student contribution and understanding. The response and positive interaction enhances involvement, stimulation and language practice in classrooms. According to Ajmal, Nawaz, and Kauser (2022), teacher-student meaningful interaction in Pakistani ESL classrooms has a pronounced positive impact on the confidence, engagement and language performance of the students. The perceived inclusivity inflates the extent of student learning influenced by the

quality and frequency of teacher interaction. Open ended questioning and constructive feedback are inclusive practices that enhance the engagement of learners and promote active participation. Asghar (2024) showed that inclusive teacher talk enhanced the participation of underperforming ESL students and it is crucial to note that fair interaction in the classroom is vital. The interactive behaviors of teachers have an influence on classroom climate; they involve student engagement and motivation. Students view the learning environment as accommodating when teachers seek to get their response and offer constructive feedback. Teacher-centered practices involving limited interaction, in turn, limit the opportunities of communication, preventing the development of communicative competence (Ahmed et al., 2024). The perceptions of teacher interaction are the perceptions of learners towards the quality, distinctness and fairness of classroom communication. Favorable perceptions are linked with an increased level of motivation, participation in classes, and emotional security. According to previous studies in the EFL setting, students find teachers who provide good explanations, helpful feedback, and positive oral communication especially helpful since they help students to feel that they are in a conducive learning environment (Hattie and Timperley, 2007).

In Pakistani higher education classrooms where the teacher-centered instructional methods are still dominant, student perceptions are important in comprehending their learning experiences. One-way or dominating teacher talk can restrict student interactions, and interactive and dialogic communication promote active learning and student interaction (Mercer and Howe, 2012). In addition, perceptions of students tend to mediate the correlation between the behavior of teachers and the outcomes of learning, considering that learners perceive the same learning process in different ways, depending on their experiences and expectations (Fraser, 2014). The issue of gender differences is important in determining the teacher interaction patterns and classroom communication perceptions by students. The studies in EFL settings indicate that the interactional patterns of the teacher towards the male and female students can be subconsciously different, which is determined by the classroom dynamics and the sociocultural expectations. Female educators are considered to be more caring, emotional, and supportive, and male educators are more commonly related to authoritative classroom care and discipline-related styles of interaction (Pawlak et al., 2025). Such stereotypes of gender might influence the interest, the comfort of students and their readiness to take part in the classroom discussion. According to Ma et al. (2025), the same tendencies were observed in Chinese classrooms, as women students tended to receive less attention as instructors, and the boys received more negative feedback. These interactional imbalances indicate the unconscious gender bias in the classroom practices. These inequalities are known to create a perception of equity and teacher assistance in students, which eventually affects engagement, motivation, and learning activities. The type of communication that teachers exhibit is gender specific and is significant in influencing how students perceive their teachers in terms of accessibility and support in the teaching process. It is believed that male teachers are more likely to follow a task-focused and consultative communication style and female teachers prefer to use a structured, inclusive, and relational type of interaction, which differently affects the classroom experiences of students (Derakhshan and Fathi, 2024).

The biased teacher-student interaction based on gender may also lead to the differences in the confidence, participation, and academic results of the students. Empirical data on EFL classrooms suggest that male students are usually given more affirmative feedback, more time to speak, and leadership-related roles, whereas female students experience a lower level of confidence due to a perception of disproportionate treatment (Liu et al., 2022). These imbalances

may have an adverse impact on the desire of female students to engage actively in the classroom discourse. Such patterns of interaction do indicate larger sociocultural standards wherein the female pupils might internalize limited participation ideals. It has been explained in classroom discourse research that female students tend to bargain their identities and voices in learning spaces where the implicit role of the male student and the authority is privileged (Handford and Gee, 2023). These findings, together, help to focus on the need to develop balanced and gender-sensitive practices of interaction to allow every student to feel appreciated, encouraged, and equally active in the learning process. Despite the fact that gender and classrooms interaction is a well-studied literature, little emphasis has been placed on gender-based perception of teacher interaction among secondary school students in terms of English language classes. There has been a lot of the current research that concentrates on observable teacher behaviors instead of systematically comparing the experiences of male and female students with the manner in which they perceive classroom communication. Such a gap is especially critical in educational contexts in South Asia, including in Pakistan, where social cultural norms and gender expectations are deeply embedded and could, therefore, affect patterns of interaction and experiences of learners (Shamim, 2023). The analysis of gender-specific attitudes toward teacher interaction is relevant in the professional life of teachers and in terms of teacher education. The research findings can inform the teachers to implement gender-responsive methods of communication, such as equal sharing of questions, inclusive turn-taking, and structured participation strategies to provide students with equal participation (Mercer, S., and Dornyei, 2022). Also, policies related to institutional approaches to gender-sensitive pedagogy and reflective teaching practices can help to increase learning, motivation, and participation in English language classrooms (Benavot, 2022).

Research Methodology

The research design used in this study was quantitative research design, which aimed at analyzing the perception of the students in secondary schools about teachers interaction in the English classroom and exploring the differences among gender. The descriptive-comparative design was adopted, and it enables gathering numerical data to define perceptions and contrast groups (male vs. female) with no manipulations of any variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). The design proved to be suitable because it allows a systematic study of the interaction between gender and perceived teacher interaction by the students. Students in Grade 8, 9, and 10 of government secondary schools in District Gujranwala, Punjab, Pakistan, were included in the population of the study, both male and female students. Such grades were chosen because of the developmental maturity of students and previous engagement in classroom interactions that rendered them to give informed perceptions on teacher behavior. The entire population in the district comprised of about 9,000 students in 40 schools. Participants were selected using cluster random sampling method. The schools were considered clusters and a random selection of 20 schools (10 male and 10 female) was made. Students in Grades 8, 9, and 10 currently studying in these schools were all invited to take part. The last sample consisted of 1,350 students with an equal number of 675 and 675 boys and girls respectively. The rationale behind the use of cluster sampling was the extensive geographic spread of schools and logistical feasibility; in addition, schools were given an equal opportunity of sampling, and sampling bias was minimized (Iliyasu & Etikan, 2021).

Instrumentation

The technique employed in the study was the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction- Urdu version (QTI-U) to measure the students perceptions concerning teacher interaction in English classrooms. The original QTI was designed in the Netherlands among the secondary students (Breklemans et al., 2002) and it was then translated in Australia in English among eight teacher behaviors: Understanding, Helpful/Friendly, Leadership, Admonishing, Student Responsibility, Dissatisfied, Freedom, Strict, and Uncertain (Wubbels, 2011). The Pakistan Urdu version of QTI is a standardized version of the QTI and has 48 items and has been utilized in previous research on teacher interaction across subject and gender (. To conduct this research, it was translated to Urdu through a forward-back forward trick and checked with other professionals to make sure that it is clear and culturally acceptable.

Data Collection
The Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI-U) was administered in Urdu version to Grade 8, 9 and 10 students of the government secondary school of District Gujranwala, both male and female. The questionnaires were distributed to the students in classrooms under the supervision of the researcher and the students were made aware of the objective of the study and guaranteed anonymity and voluntariness. Questionnaires were filled in and the filled questionnaires were then collected to prevent errors and data loss.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Students' perceptions mean score about their teachers' interaction significantly differ from the mean scale score in English classroom

QTI Subscales	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	Df	t-value	p-value
Leadership	4.70	0.43	1.70	1349	165.4	0.00
Understanding	4.38	0.53	1.38	1349	110.2	0.00
Helping / Friendly	4.05	0.59	1.05	1349	66.8	0.00
Student Responsibility	3.24	0.55	0.24	1349	17.9	0.00
Strict	3.21	0.74	0.21	1349	10.8	0.00
Admonishing	2.61	0.70	-0.39	1349	-23.1	0.00
Uncertain	2.33	0.66	-0.67	1349	-40.3	0.00
Dissatisfied	2.18	0.83	-0.82	1349	-39.5	0.00

* The value is significant at Alpha level = 0.05

Table 1 indicates that the students perception on the interaction of their teachers in English classroom showed a significant difference with the theoretical mean score of 3.00 across all the subscales of the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI) and the p-values are less than 0.001 which implies strong statistical significance. Leadership (M = 4.70, MD = 1.70), Understanding (M = 4.38, MD = 1.38), Helping/Friendly (M = 4.05, MD = 1.05), Student Responsibility (M = 3.24, MD = 0.24) and Strict (M = 3.21, MD = 0.21) had positive mean differences. These results indicate that students tended to view their teachers as classroom leaders, helpful, friendly, and moderately strict, and they promoted student responsibility when interacting with students in the classroom. Contrastingly, negative mean differences were observed with regards to the Admonishing (M = 2.61, MD = -0.39), Uncertain (M = 2.33, MD = -0.67), and Dissatisfied (M = 2.18, MD = -0.82) which showed that students perceived these behaviors less often. It means that

the teachers hardly had overly critical, uncertain, or comfortably disheartened behavior, which is a positive sign of a classroom environment. The t-values of all the subscales were high, which affirmed that the differences between the perception of students and theoretical mean were statistically significant at the level of 0.05 and thus validated the reliability of the results obtained. On the whole, the results indicate that the study teachers of English in the sampled secondary schools can be viewed as supportive, understanding, and helpful, with the leadership and guidance being comparatively emphasized as the predominant negative behaviors (admonishing, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction) are relatively small. Such findings indicate a positive pattern of interaction between a teacher and students, which can help to create a more interesting and encouraging learning process and contribute to the academic and social growth of students.

Table 2: Gender differences in students' perceptions about teachers' interaction in English classroom

QTI Subscales	Male Mean	Male SD	Female Mean	Female SD	Mean Difference	Df	t-value	p-value
Leadership	4.70	0.44	4.74	0.41	0.04	1348	2.50	0.01
Understanding	4.36	0.55	4.38	0.53	0.02	1348	1.10	0.27
Helping Friendly	4.05	0.60	4.07	0.59	0.02	1348	1.15	0.25
Student Responsibility	3.23	0.57	3.24	0.55	0.01	1348	0.70	0.48
Strict	3.22	0.74	3.21	0.73	-0.01	1348	-0.45	0.65
Admonishing	2.62	0.70	2.61	0.69	-0.01	1348	-0.50	0.62
Uncertain	2.32	0.67	2.32	0.66	0.00	1348	0.00	1.00
Dissatisfied	2.19	0.83	2.19	0.82	0.00	1348	0.00	1.00

Male students=675 & Female students=675

Table 2 shows the outcome of the independent-samples t-test that compares the difference in perceptions of the students about the teacher-student interaction in the English classroom based on the gender factor. The results have shown that in most of the subscales of the QTI, there was no significant difference between male and female students in perceptions and the difference in the mean scores was very low. The female students also scored slightly higher than the male students on Leadership (Female M = 4.74, Male M = 4.70, MD = 0.04, t = 2.50, p = 0.01), which is statistically significant but insignificant, which implies that female students rated their teachers as having a little more leadership-oriented than male students. In the case of the other subscales, such as Understanding (MD = 0.02, t = 1.10, p = 0.27), Helping/Friendly (MD = 0.02, t = 1.15, p = 0.25), Student Responsibility (MD = 0.01, t = 0.70, p = 0.48), Strict (MD = -0.01, t = -0.45, P = 0.65), Admonishing These results indicate that male and female students have a very similar view of the interactions of their teachers in English classes. In general, the findings show that positive behaviors of teachers, including leadership, understanding, and helpfulness, are constantly known by both male and female students, whereas the negative behaviors, including admonishing, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction, are recognized with different frequencies with a

slight difference between the male and female students. This means that the patterns of interaction between teachers are seen as equal between the two genders with the difference that the leadership perception is a little higher among the female students.

Conclusions

The results show that in most cases students find interactions with their teachers in the English classroom to be positive, supportive and leadership-oriented. The teachers are perceived as friendly, supportive as well as promoting student responsibility without being too strict on classroom discipline. The presence of negative behaviors, e.g., being over critical, uncertain, or dissatisfied, is not too frequent, which is evidence of the positive and encouraging classroom environment, which contributes to the academic and social growth of students. The gender differences were analyzed and it was found that the ways in which both male and female students view teacher interaction do not differ significantly in many ways. A little difference is observed in leadership where female students report that their teachers are slightly more leadership-oriented as opposed to male students. In all the other behaviors, genders have the same view, and this is an indicator that teachers have equal and positive interaction patterns in the classroom. On the whole, these findings indicate that interactions of teachers are positively perceived by every student, which creates an engaging and promoting studying environment.

Discussion

In this study, students viewed their English teachers as having more supportive, understanding, and helpful qualities, had strong leadership attributes and focused on responsibility in students. This is in line with other larger studies that have indicated that positive teacher student interactions are important in increasing learner engagement, motivation, and emotional wellbeing (Jia and Cheng, 2024). Friendliness, clear communication, and support are positive forms of interaction behavior that will assist in establishing a classroom environment where students feel that they are heard and motivated to actively engage in the classroom, and this may result in further classroom engagement and academic involvement. These interactive teacher behaviors have been associated with high levels of motivation and attendance in classes in different learning settings and as such, the relevance of relational skills of teachers to facilitate positive learning experience cannot be underestimated. The fact that rather negative behaviors, including admonishing, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction, were rarely perceived indicates that the sampled teachers had a predisposed tendency to favor the scenario of interacting in such a manner that would contribute to a stable and encouraging classroom climate. This is sustained by literature which has underlined the beneficial role played by nurturing and frequent teacher student interaction towards the classroom well-being and motivation of students. To illustrate, studies of online learning have indicated that there is a correlation between teacher-student interaction and the psychological well-being, satisfaction, and engagement of the students (Liang et al., 2025) which implies that supportive teacher behavior creates trust and security, in both physical and virtual classrooms.

In terms of gender differences, the results of the analysis showed that there were no significant differences in the perception of how teachers interact with students between the male and female groups with only a small difference, which was statistically significant in terms of perceived leadership. This is in line with the studies that indicated that the difference between genders in the classroom setting is not always significant, especially in the modern educational setting where the emphasis is on the inclusive and equitable methods of classroom instruction, yet the minor differences might still be observed in certain aspects of interactions (Yuan, 2024). Equally

important, research concerning gendered classroom dynamics observes that the total participation and engagement might be not significantly different by gender, but there can be some subtle differences in the way teachers pay attention, provide feedback, or grant leadership opportunities, which can also change the perceptions of the students about their support and classroom relationships (BALYER, A., and OZCAN, 2022).

In general, the findings indicate the assumption that positive and fair teacher interaction patterns can offer a motivating and engaging learning environment. Research papers that review interpersonal behavior of teachers point out that, among students, the perception that teachers are supportive and respectful lead to greater likelihood of a student being connected with classroom activities, being more motivated to study, and showcasing increased participation (Khanam & Javed, 2023). This kind of interaction helps not only to develop academically but also socially and emotionally and supports interpersonal teacher behaviors to be in the focus of holistic student outcomes.

Recommendations

Resting on the results of the given study, some recommendations could be offered to help to improve teacher-student interaction in English classrooms. To begin with, professional development programs are supposed to be offered in schools to enable the teachers to improve their leadership, communication and supportive interaction skills because these behaviors contribute a huge positive influence on the student engagement and motivation. Second, educators are to keep in fostering fair classroom behavior, whereby both boys and girls students are given an equal attention and opportunities, and with the consideration of differences, which are not evident, especially in leadership. Third, negative behaviors should also be reduced, e.g., admonishing, uncertainty, and dissatisfaction expressions to create a positive and motivating atmosphere in a classroom. Lastly, the educators must also introduce the strategies that promote student accountability, such as group activities, peer-to-peer activities, and classroom decision making opportunities, which can also promote social, academic and personal growth of students. These recommendations can help to make the English classroom experiences more effective, inclusive, and engaging.

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